



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 11 January 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
11 JANUARY 1968

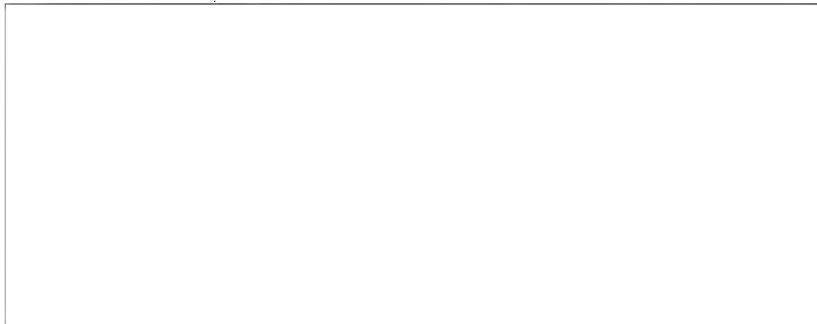
1. Vietnam

Vietnamese Communist propaganda has again endorsed the idea of a coalition government in South Vietnam and simultaneously condemned Saigon for seeking to block avenues to peace. In doing so, Hanoi seems more interested in fanning the unrest in the South over this issue than in spelling out what it means when it calls for a coalition government.

2. Thailand

Bangkok is pushing harder for the kind of status of forces agreement it wants from the US. It has now announced a new set of procedures for dealing with US military offenders. The key provision requires that before taking custody of arrested US soldiers, US authorities must agree in writing that they be turned back to the Thais for prosecution "on request."

3. Communist China



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4. Singapore

Harold Wilson is in for some tough arguments this weekend when Lee Kuan Yew flies in with fire in his eye. Lee will fight hard to get the British to move away from their timetable for withdrawal from Singapore by 1971. He has calmed down somewhat since his first fierce talk about reprisals against British economic interests. Still, he is deadly serious.

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5. Czechoslovakia

The new leaders are hinting at a much more liberal regime. An article in yesterday's official party daily, according to excerpts distributed by the Czech news agency, calls for withdrawal of the party from direct administration of the government and the economy. It also makes a strong pitch for the respect of individual rights.

Although set forth in general terms, these ideas are radical indeed for Czechoslovakia. Yet they presumably reflect the consensus of the party central committee which last week ousted party boss Novotny.

6. India

Mrs. Gandhi is making a gradual recovery from the paralyzing shock of last February's election. Months of careful political fence-mending began paying off in the waning weeks of the old year. With better party backing--particularly from Home Minister Chavan--she showed a new confidence and deftness in dealing with the mess in several states where opposition coalitions had lost their grip. The Congress Party is now back in the driver's seat in these states.

Whether Mrs. Gandhi's touch retains its magic will depend on the willingness of strong rivals within her party to keep on pulling together behind their leader.

7. Japan - Soviet Union

Trade between the two countries reached an all-time high last year. The Soviet Union has now replaced China as Japan's top Communist trading partner. Signs point to further increases this year.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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More on the Trinh Statement: The first secretary of the French Embassy in Vientiane in a recent conversation with US Embassy officials there has given a surprisingly balanced interpretation of the recent Trinh statement. In contrast to some French statements which have portrayed the Trinh statement as particularly significant and forthcoming, the diplomat offered his opinion that there were no signs that the North Vietnamese have altered their hard line concerning the substantive nature of any negotiations. In addition, he felt that the Trinh statement seemed admirably suited as a tactic to put pressure on the US to stop the bombing.

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North Vietnamese Railways: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] comments

on the North Vietnamese railway system. [REDACTED] along the major rail lines, rocks, cement, sand, dirt, rails, and wooden beams are stockpiled at two kilometer intervals to facilitate rapid bomb damage repair. Bridge repair crews normally consist of about 16 men augmented by as many locally recruited civilians as are necessary (sometimes in the thousands) to complete repairs. Repair work on a damaged rail or railroad bridge section may begin as soon as two hours after a bombing raid.

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Often temporary bridges are constructed that are not strong enough to bear the weight of a locomotive. In such cases, the railroad cars are pushed across the bridge by one engine and hooked up to another on the other side.

As a rule trains move at night, are about one kilometer long with either two engines at the front, or one at either end. Passenger cars also usually move at night and are mixed with cargo cars. The majority of the trains traveling from Hanoi to Lang Son on the Chinese border are armed with antiaircraft artillery and/or machine guns.

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Decentralization: One aspect of the Hanoi government's efforts to decentralize the economy and to place more responsibility on provincial administrators has been reported [REDACTED]

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[redacted] in mid-1966 the workers at the phosphate plant [redacted] in Thanh Hoa, south of Hanoi, were told that henceforth the province would be responsible for operating the plant and for producing all products used by the people. [redacted]

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[redacted] the workers were disheartened by this news and feared that their jobs would be made more difficult by what they felt would be inefficient administration. [redacted]

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Antiwar Gathering: Hanoi radio on 9 January announced that a group of 50 representatives of various American organizations in Europe opposed to the "US aggressive war in Vietnam" met in Paris on 7 January and formed a "continent-wide coordinating committee" named American Opposition Abroad. The broadcast reported that the group pledged to promote demonstrations by Americans against "the dirty US war in Vietnam" on George Washington's birthday and on 2 April. Additionally, the committee announced that it would circulate a petition among Americans in Europe, declaring the intention of the signatories to encourage draft resistance.

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